

Interview with Charles Davis
Conducted by Sue Kovack Schuman for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective
Observer Linda Byrne

Charles: This is Charles Davis being interviewed on January 11, 2008, by Sue Kovack Schuman and Linda Byrne.

Sue: And Mr. Davis we would like you to tell us about a lot of things that would help us with the history project taking a look back at the Providence District and we understand that you can tell us a lot about the Jefferson Volunteer Fire Department so we wonder how long were you with the Jefferson Volunteer Fire Department, or how long were you a fire?

Charles: Alright. It was back in about 1952, I guess, I moved to a community called North Woodley on Arlington Blvd at Graham Road. There was an intersection there. There was an airport on the southeast corner of Graham Road and Arlington Blvd., where the Loehman's Plaza shopping center is now. I lived on the opposite corner, northwest I think and this was my housing development of 130 homes. I was the first occupant of my house in 1952.

Somehow I don't remember how we got together, but there was a public gathering of people interested in creating a fire department in our area. We knew that Falls Church, VFD because of rush hour traffic could not get there in a proper amount of response time. Both their ambulance and/or the fire engine were first due in our area.

We knew they couldn't get there which created a hazard. All of us who came together had been firemen somewhere else. I was a member of one before the war.

There was the emergency Civil Defense Corps. I was working at the Norfolk Navy Yard. I lived in Berkeley, Virginia across the river from the Navy Yard and we used to go across the river on a Navy tug (to work). They would send a tug over to us and take us to a dock at the Navy Yard. The Marine Corps guards would check our badges as we entered the yard. But anyway, about two blocks from where I lived, there was a Norfolk City Fire

Department station where they kept a reserve engine that they turned over to the Civil Defense Corps volunteers.

Sue: What did a Civil Defense volunteer do?

Charles: They did a lot of things. They patrolled the streets at night when we had total black outs.

I remember I lived in a rooming house in D.C. and we had one of our roommates who became an air raid warden.

Sue: Was this during World War II?

Charles: Yes. He would go out on the street on the 1700 Block of Q Street and if he saw a light in a window, he would blow his whistle and tell them to close their drapes because it was a total blackout. In defense of Washington there were anti-aircraft guns mounted on the Bureau of Printing and Engraving building across the street from the Department of Agriculture. They were also mounted on the roof of what was then called the War Department building (next to the White House). They were on the roof and they were manned by the National Guard. That was part of the defense of Washington.

Sue: In Norfolk you were doing Civil Defense?

Charles: Civil Defense was all over the country. This country was vulnerable for being bombed, particularly on the coasts, so Civil Defense was a Federal Program and they did all sorts of things.

Sue: What did you specifically do?

Charles: Well, I was a volunteer fireman in Norfolk. We could ride with the regular firemen, but that particular firehouse they had this extra "piece" stored there. A "piece" is a fire truck or an ambulance. Since they had an extra "piece" stored there they let the Civil Defense volunteers use it. It was excess to their immediate needs. They were called "reserve pieces" and at this station, the Civil Defense volunteers were permitted to to man it

when they could. We had an advantage since the paid men had particular routes to follow. If we happened to be in the station at the time a fire alarm sounded we could respond with the reserve engine. But we did not have to follow prescribed routes.

Most of the Civil defense volunteers were born and raised in that little village so we would go down alleys and across fields and we would get the nearest hydrant. That was a plus, because you would lay out the least amount of hose to get to the fire.

The paid firemen would get the next hydrant and have to lay out an extra 500 or 600 feet of hose all of which you have to dry when you return to quarters. You have to scrub down the hose and hang it in the drying tower to let it dry out. You then have to put fresh hose on. We would load the hose in such a way that when you got to a fire, the hose would peel off as you advanced. One 50 foot length, called the donut roll, would be put on the back step.

Sue: This was in the 1950's?

Linda: 40's.

Charles: This was before the war so this was late 1941, early 1942. If the fire was before the hydrant the first fire engine responding to the scene would stop at the fire ground. The second piece would drop its hose and proceed to the hydrant trailing hose. Anyway, we did everything. I rode on the ladder truck sometimes and their purpose was to ventilate and give entry to the hose company. We followed these same procedures in Jefferson VFD. We had up to an hours work when we returned from a fire: cleaning, hanging and reracking hose on the engine.

Sue: Were you born in the Norfolk area?

Charles: No, I was born on Staten Island in New York City and I came to Washington, D.C. in 1941. I worked in D.C. for a little while and when I got an offer at the Norfolk Navy Yard went down there to work. And that's how I got to Norfolk.

Sue: What year were you born?

Charles: 1919 and I came to Washington in May of 1941. And I worked for the Smithsonian Institution as my first job, and my second job was with Agriculture, and my third job was at the Norfolk Navy Yard. You moved around a lot in those days cause you get promotions.

Sue: What kind of jobs did you do for Agriculture and for Smithsonian?

Charles: At Smithsonian I worked for the Bureau of International Exchange. What they did was there no shipping available so all the Professor's and other researchers at the various Universities who were turning out books describing their research and studies and all kinds of things. But they could not ship anything to Europe or the Pacific.

There is a tremendous exchange of information between the many colleges and universities world wide. Arrangements were that they would send their reports to the Smithsonian. We had a big storage shed in the backyard of the Castle where we would accumulate and store these reports after putting them in shipping crates by Country. We had bins where we would accumulate them by Country of destination. When the bins got full we would box them and put them in the storage shed. We would receive clearance periodically to send maybe sixty cases to Europe. They were sending all kinds of war goods, so we were low priority. But every once in a while we did get an opportunity to ship, so that is what we did.

Then I went to Agriculture as a messenger. Actually I had two jobs; I distributed the incoming and picked up the outgoing mail during the day. I worked in the duplicating section. I ran the mimeograph machine and collated papers. We use to walk around a table with piles of paper and collate. You got pretty tired after you did 150 of those, even though there were three or four people. So finally, my boss- he was a civilian employee, and the Branch Section Chief, got an old dining room table (a round one). He made two steps on it, attached an electric motor so the table turned and so we just sat there and did our work (pulled off sheet by sheet) as the table went around.

Linda: How clever.

Charles: He did this on his own; no contract to build the table or anything else. He found the somewhere; the thought struck him, and that was it.

Sue: What ingenuity.

Charles: He built, it brought it in, and we used that. Years ago things like that happened, but today if you did anything like that you would be fired in a heart beat because they didn't initiate a contract and nobody would make any money.

To digress to fire activities in Norfolk: I remember sitting on the roof of a burning building with a regular fireman from the ladder truck. We were up on a roof, each with an axe to ventilate. If you don't ventilate the house it could blow the roof off because of the accumulation of heat inside.

So you try to get to the top floor and knock the windows out, or somehow ventilate. We couldn't get entry into the house. The house had caught fire and there happened to be a group of colored people who thought pretty highly of their piano, I guess. They tried to get the piano out the front door and it got stuck so the firemen could not get into the house.

They finally chopped the piano to pieces to gain entry. The professional firefighter I was assigned to said "come on Charlie, we have to ventilate this roof". So we put a ladder up and climbed to the roof. We're sitting there chopping a hole in the roof and he said "if I were you, I'd sit on this side of hole, and I said "what for", and just about that time we got the hole opened and smoke hit me right in the face. He was on the downwind side. It was funny.

Sue: Were you injured on the job?

Charles: No, just got a lung full of smoke. But, that's how I got involved in being a fireman. It is exciting being a fireman and it gets in your blood and once it is in your blood you can't get it out.

But let's discuss Jefferson VFD about 1952 or so, a group of neighbors determined that a fire engine or ambulance could not get to where we lived during rush hour without a long delay. That was not acceptable. We knew we needed to get our own fire station. I don't remember how the word got out, but a bunch of us met, and I can't remember if we met at Graham Road School or a church or somebody's basement. We had an initial meeting and everybody agreed this was a good thing to do and we would help to create it.

Then we had another meeting and got three times as many people, so now we were kind of off the ground a little bit and we finally got the thing together and the first thing we had to do was raise some money.

So, we went out and knocked on doors and asked each family if they would contribute to creating a fire department in our area. We envisioned it on Arlington Boulevard between Graham Road and Seven Corners, wherever we could obtain land.

We finally got some money together. There was a vacant lot at Annandale Rd. and Arlington Blvd., about 100 feet off of Arlington Blvd. on the left as you are going toward going south no, let's see which direction going toward Gallows Road. It is where the IHOP is now. We got an option to buy this land but the Lake Barcroft residents objected strenuously! They didn't like the blowing of a siren to summon the firemen. It was loud, you could hear it for two miles, and Lake Barcroft people thought it would lower the value of their property. They said "we want the fire department, but not here; not in my back yard." We thought there's no point in fighting these people, as they are quite wealthy.

We were offered a piece of land. There was a garden shop further up Annandale Road right where it made the first bend. The owner was along in years and was ready to sell his business, so he said "I can sell you this land", which he had no building on it. So we took an option on this and again we were rebuffed by the neighborhood.

We were not getting desperate when we were offered the piece of land where Jefferson is now. This was our third go at it. We were now aware that we would have to make a stand somewhere, because nobody wants us in “their back yard” and if we are going to have a fire department we have to stopped being acquiescent and just do it.

Mrs. Anne Wilkins, at the time, was Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, I don’t know if you remember her. She was a good friend of mine. We used to BBQ together out in our back yards and things like that. We decided this is where we are going to be. The airport didn’t object.

South Woodley residence didn’t want us. They all wanted a firehouse and the protection, but they didn’t want to put themselves out.

So, we decided we had to go for it. The Board of Supervisors scheduled a hearing and South Woodley sent a U.S. Marine Major to the hearing. Anne Wilkins chaired this hearing. We had done everything we knew to do.

They sent this Major to represent them. We had given our reasons as to why a fire station was required and what it would do for our area of the county. Anne Wilkins said to the Major after he had made a beautiful counter discussion, “Major, where do you vote?” He said South Dakota, Texas or someplace and she said “thank you that is all”. We got our station permits. Anne was clever, and a charming and delightful person.

Sue: At this time were stations professional fire fighters or all volunteers?

Charles: All volunteers. At that time the County had no paid men. They didn’t have any paid men until 1960 or thereabouts. Charlie Jones was our first paid fireman it was four or five years before we got another.

Sue: So it was not hard to recruit volunteer firefighters, but it was to find the land for the firehouse, right?

Charles: Absolutely. We had a lot of response from neighbors once the word got out. Here is a roster of them. This is much later, but you can have that. Here is one of our early brochures.

Sue: That's the Jefferson Volunteer Fire Department?

Charles: Yeah.

Linda: Look at those trucks.

Charles: You can copy this if you'd like. It is an up to date by-laws of the fire department. It has questions and answers, "Legal State of the Jefferson Volunteer Fire Department a non-profit Organization and Corporation in the State of Virginia with responsibility to account for contributions. The Treasurer is bonded and the bank of Mount Vernon Bank and Trust Company, Wilson Branch publishes annual reports. The contributors name and address should appear on checks and a log will be kept by the Treasurer of all amount contributions. Why doesn't the county assume responsibility? The entire county is covered by volunteer fire departments; as long as it can stay that way it will cost you no more than you give - present tax of 10 cents per \$100,000 of property evaluation is for fire protection. If the county assumed responsibility, the tax rate would be at least three times the present rate." They used to give us \$50,000 to get a new truck every year and the trucks cost like \$250,000 so that put the onus on us.

Sue: At what point did you become a paid fire fighter?

Charles: I never did.

Sue: Oh, you never did?

Charles: We had paid fire fighters, but I never did because I worked for the government and I earned more than I would have as a fire fighter.

Sue: As an aside, I was looking on the Fairfax Web Site and I saw where the first career firefighters were hired at \$2,500 a year in 1960.

Charles: Did the County help the fire department? Yes but only after the land, buildings and equipment are purchased and the department is found

to be operational and acceptable. They wouldn't give us anything until we were approved.

How does the county help? They later provided a full time fireman, singular. They provided gas and oil for the equipment, raincoats, boots, and hats (ten per truck). We had thirty volunteers, provided two way radio equipment (and they did have a dispatcher), provided all utilities for the firehouse, a little cash for miscellaneous expenses, only if available at the end of the fiscal year." So they didn't do much worthwhile for any volunteer fire company..

Sue: The County opened its first training center in 1965 for fire fighters, did you have professional training?

Charles: Oh sure. The University of Maryland had a fire school; we arranged to go there to be trained. They had a Professor of Fire Safety. He was a full professor and Dean of the fire school; and one of our member's brother was an instructor there. Some of our members came from D.C., they lived out here and they were paid fire fighters in D.C., but they joined up with us immediately. They found out about us and they were right there to help.

Sue: Fairfax had a good reputation?

Charles: They joined wherever they lived, all over the county and also in Arlington, I am sure a fireman is a fireman. Once it gets in your blood, you can't get it out. Even today when I hear a fire engine coming it raises my alertness a little bit and I haven't run a fire in twenty years.

Sue: I wonder if you could tell me a little about the fires.

Charles: Okay. That is how we got started then the next thing was, we were able to buy a piece of land and my recollection is we paid \$20,000 for the plot of land, but that was just the very beginning. We had to build a firehouse and we built it in two parts. We built the equipment room first and some years later we erected a second building for a fire hall so we could run bingo and earn our own money without having to beg for it.

Before we even had a firehouse, we had a fire engine. There was a CITGO Station on the corner, a little gas station right opposite the firehouse. The man that owned that was a member of our fire department. At night we got plenty of response to the fire siren, but little at daytime. I was at work at the Pentagon, so were my neighbor and others. So getting manpower during the day was not good.

We needed to buy a fire engine so about twenty of us advanced \$1,000 each. We purchased a used one with the money. But let me go back a little bit.

Before we had the building we bought an old fire engine it was about a 1929 La France. It had a great big wide step on the back where six firemen could stand. They don't have that anymore. It didn't have a windshield as this engine was 20 some years of age.

We had goggles that we wore and a great big bell mounted right in front, but this engine ran. So we had that, which wasn't much. Then Ft. Meyer had a 1942 fire engine that came up for sale and it was not very expensive. They had retired it, so we bought that and we updated to 1942. I don't know what kind it was, but it was a leap forward for us.

We use to run them both to the fires. The only problem was that when we parked the very old one on a hill and started to leave the drive shaft would break. We knew where we replacement shafts. We learned to roll it down the hill, get it on the level, and park it until we could get a new drive shaft and put it on. The metal was just brittle because it was twenty-five years old and all the drive shafts were brittle. But we had a source, fortunately so we just used it as a second piece. It worked; I mean it had a pump that well worked when you hooked it up to a hydrant, just as good as any other one. But that's how we started out. We obtained an ambulance. A Cadillac chassis with a Henny body. It was a big white beautiful thing, not like the boxes they have today. We use to keep that in the CITGO Station Lubrication Bay because we didn't want anything to happen to it. We use to keep the fire engine on the ramp at this lot. That is how we got started. Then when we built the firehouse, we could keep our equipment indoors.

We had to be accepted by the County as a V.F.D. We went to Company #13, Dunn Loring, and asked if they would sponsor us for accreditation. We needed to get a sponsor in order to become a fire department in Fairfax. They refused our request. We then asked Annandale Company #8 to sponsor us. Company #8 said they would be glad to be our sponsor and we are forever grateful to them for doing this. They sponsored us and we were on our way to be Fairfax County Company No. 18. We borrowed the money to build the firehouse from Fairfax S & L.

As we still needed money we would take the fire engine go up a street, turn all the lights on and blow the siren to attract attention. We firemen would knock on the doors and people would ask how much they should give. They had no idea of the dollar amount. We had figured this out and concluded that \$20 per home we would fine.

It was surprising how many gave us \$20. We gave each donor a receipt. I was treasurer and they would bring the money to my house. We would count it together and my wife would deposit it the next day.

Sue: How often did you do this fund raising?

Charles: Every night.

Sue: Every night, for how long?

Charles: Oh for a couple of years and this was not easy, a lot of effort went into this. So we erected the building. Now we had a building and a contractor by the name of Harry Davis who built a lot of houses and churches in Fairfax; he became our contractor. Harry Davis (my name is Davis too) was probably twenty-five years my senior, I called him Harry but he would call me Mr. Davis and I guess he did that because I was his customer. I was pretty much involved in the construction.

When we got all finished with the firehouse, the original building, Harry Davis showed us how much it cost erect the building. Then he knocked off I think about 15% of the bill to which he said "this is my contribution to you

firemen". I said "no, we can't let you do that". I got a receipt book and I gave him a receipt to a non-profit organization in that amount and I said here you can either file this with your tax return or not as you choose. You are most deserving of this. So he took it and I hope he filed it with his tax return. The building was perfect.

They sent the wrong gravel for the roof. They had a dump truck unload it all in the drive and Harry Davis went out and said that's not the right gravel. They said "Harry we already dumped it and everything". Harry said get it out of here; so they sent some folks over with shovels and they shoveled it back into the dump truck and brought back the right gravel. That is how particular and thorough he was.

We now had our equipment building and a mortgage. About 10 of us had advanced \$1000 each, a no interest load, to buy the fire engine.

As we got a little bit ahead on our money I paid back all of these firemen in \$500 increments. Some of them needed their \$500 "right now" and I gave them a check for \$500. We settled on \$500 at a time until we got everybody paid off. They were all very gracious about it. That's what gets into a fireman's blood; you are willing to do these things. We were finally certified as a proper volunteer fire company. Later on we built a hall because we said we have to have a source of income and in those days bingo was a big thing to do and still is. I think that Dunn Loring still runs bingo and Annandale may also do so.

Sue: Are you still involved with anything for the fire department any activities now? Do you still help out?

Charles: No. I had moved away and now it is a completely paid department. We had a social hall building and I think we called it Flame Room. When we erected the second building I asked Harry Davis if there were some way he could put this addition on and not connect it to the existing building. What is the minimum connection you can make between the two buildings? He said I only had to have one thing, a piece of copper that goes across the building roof so the water won't run down between

the two structures. He said he would put them together, but that they would be separate.

And I was looking forward to the time, and I knew even then, that someday the County would have to assume Fire and Rescue Service responsibility - had to.

We were first due at Seven Corners. It is hard to imagine how much it was valued at, but if you took all the stores, the buildings, all of the shelving's and equipment in the buildings and added the entire inventory in the buildings and everything like that and having a volunteer fire company being tasked to protect that much value was ridiculous, but it was all we had at that time.

We were also first due at a place called Melpar which is now called E Systems. It contained a lot of classified equipment. They arranged for three of us who worked for the Defense Department with appropriate security clearances, to tour the facility.

It is extremely dangerous to go into a fire and have never been in the building. That was similar to when the Pentagon caught fire. It was in the subbasement and none of the firemen responding had ever been in there and they couldn't find the fire. The Pentagon has five floors above and three below. There was a basement, a sub basement and a mezzanine. The fire erupted below ground, as I remember it was an Air Force computer room. All the floors were raised and they had all kinds of wires underneath for their computers. It also had a low ceiling because the whole area was climate controlled for both air conditioning and humidity. They boxed it to the minimum size. The fire broke out down there and the building guards weren't a lot of help because they didn't want to go in. They were not trained for this.

Sue: Are you talking the Pentagon?

Charles: Yes, about late 1950's. You put a fire out in three ways, you can either smother it, let me go back a little bit there's what you call a fire triangle, it was three legs to a fire, it has to have oxygen, it has to have fuel

and it has to have heat to have a fire. If you deny any one of those things you don't have a fire, you have to have those three things. So, you can put a fire out by cooling it, you can smother it with water you can smother it keep the air away or you can drown it. And when they use foam it is a device to smother the fire in the aircraft people use that all the time foam that smothers the fire. So if you deny any one of those three legs of the stool, there is no fire.

Sue: Now, there were other disasters in this region where Fairfax County fire fighters responded in 1968 Fairfax responded to the Washington, D.C. riots were you a part of that, do you remember that era?

Charles: I had stopped being an active fireman just about then. I was sixteen years active and I started in 1952 so about that time, I had moved to Falls Church City. I got involved with the American Legion where I put in thirty five active years.

Sue: So what was that like, the American Legion, what kind of things did you do?

Charles: You are not familiar with the American Legion.

Sue: Yes I am what kinds of things did you do?

Charles: It is a Veterans organization, they support Boys State, are you familiar with that?

Sue: Yes

Charles: We in Virginia send 800 boys, juniors in high school, the top five percent of the junior class usually, and they go down to Liberty University for a week in early June. They are assigned to the Nation A List or Federalist Party as they step off the bus. They are divided into cities of 60 students each. They elect a government parallel to the Virginia government: Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, State Senators and Delegates, Mayor and Council for each City. The real Governor of Virginia

and other notables are eager to address this group of tomorrows Leaders. The Ladies Auxiliary sponsors a similar program for girls.

Sue: Yes.

Charles: And, we have American Legion baseball which is the high school students play baseball, we support those teams; and all of this has a cost. It cost about \$400 to send each boy to Boy's State and it cost about \$2,000 to field an American Legion baseball team.

Sue: Have you played baseball?

Charles: Softball, yes.

Sue: You did?

Charles: Sure. Many of us have played baseball or softball at some time.

Sue: Where did you play?

Charles: With the American Legion Members Slow-Pitch Softball League. But the program I describe above is for High School Students.

Sue: Yes.

Charles: We in the American Legion do little for ourselves. If we have a function we pay. When we have a dinner we pay our way, but we do things mostly for our community at no cost to the community. The American Legion also supports an oratorical contest, Boy and Girl Scouts, flag disposal ceremony, many community programs and active duty military and military veterans.

Sue: Right.

Charles: As a Veteran I belonged to the Falls Church Post No. 130 at the time. I was Commander of the post when a lady came by and she had been driving from North Carolina trying get to New Jersey or somewhere like

that. She ran out of money and she had two children with her and somebody had referred her to the American Legion for assistance. She explained her plight and I asked if her husband was in the service and she yes he was. So I went over to the local hotel and booked a room for them, told her to eat and put it on her room bill and I told the proprietor we would pay the bill. When she left we filled her automobile with gasoline, made certain she was okay, and sent her on her way. There are Posts in McLean, Vienna, Fairfax City and two others in Falls Church City.

Sue: Are you still active with the post with the American Legion?

Charles: No, I am not as active in anything anymore as I used to be. My age is catching up to me. I do participate in things that I can do. I transferred to McLean Post 270 where I am also a Commander. I was 10th District commander (17 Posts)

Sue: You look active to me.

Charles: Well I do have other things I participate in. I am very active in my World War II bomb group Association.

Sue: Well I though

Charles: In WWII, I was a bombardier Navigator on the B24 flying out of Italy. We got shot down, (this has nothing to do with the fire department). We got shot down and had to bail out over Serbia. I was missing in action for 2 ½ months. My crew evaded capture thanks to the Resistance Force who made sure that we didn't get captured. There were two forces Resistance Forces, one was run by Marshall Tito, whom you probably know about, you have probably heard of him. The other one was run by General Draza Mihailovich who was appointed minister of War by King Peter of Yugoslavia. The King had to go to England, (he was a boy king at 17 years old) and when he went to England General Mihailovich remained and created the Resistance Force. He said "I don't surrender", he said "I am a soldier". He was a Colonel on the General's staff and he had been and instructor at the Military Academy in then Yugoslavia.

He stayed and created a resistance force and just by chance when my crew bailed out we landed in his area. He controlled the center of Yugoslavia and Tito controlled the edges of the Country. He saw to our safety, lodging and food. The soldiers were called Chetniks and Tito called his soldiers partisans. General Mihailovich was much more legitimate as a resistance leader.

I bailed out on June the 6th, 1944, it wasn't D Day in Italy but it was in Europe. The target was in Brazov Romania. It was an oil refinery but it was clouded over so we bombed the railroad yard instead. One of our bombardiers took out some kind of industrial building too. We did not have radar in those days so we had to do visual bombing.

We lost an engine on the way up to a malfunction, and had one shot out over the target. Soon after we left the target one of the waist gunners said we had an oil leak in #4 engine because he could see it spewing out. We had to abandon the aircraft.. But we still had enough power from the two functioning engines and were able to cross the Danube River and get over Yugoslavia.

We did not want to bail out over Romania because they were Quislings. The Romanian people would shoot you while in your parachute, not the Germans, but the Romanian people and you can't do much evasive action in a parachute. So we didn't want to bail out in Romania. We finally crossed the Danube, (the Blue Danube was dirty brown) and after we crossed that and we felt better about things.

We knew we could not get back to Italy. So the pilot gave the word and we jumped and all 10 crewmen landed safely. June 6, 1944 was when we got there. About early July we found a radio. We didn't have any code but we did get to communicate with the 15th Air Force, which was the Air Force in Italy. We established communication with them, and they directed the OSS to create an operation which was called the Halyard mission.

The Chetnik soldiers cleared a field of Shrubbery filled the holes and made a clandestine airstrip, just long enough for a C47 to land and take off. It was just the top of a slight rise. Actually the pilots landed up hill and rolled

down hill, with the same take off. They were actually going down hill on lift off.

Three OSS members had made a blind jump on August 2nd about 2:00 a.m. and they hoped they were over the right landing area. We had light signals, and but they hoped they were friendly signals because if the German's got the word of what was happening they could send the same signals. And capture these three extremely brave American soldiers.

They arrived with codes, radios and other things. Captain George Musulin who was in charge lived in McLean for many years. We were very close needless to say. He had been told before the mission that there would be less than a hundred American Airmen to be rescued. He got there, inquired around, and found there were two hundred and fifty two.

George thought "oh my God, to rescue two hundred and fifty two is going to be nearly impossible". But they finally worked out a method. They sent in six C-47 aircraft at 11:00 o'clock p.m. on the 9th of August 1944 and took off at 1:00 o'clock a.m. on the 10th. I had broken my leg so I was one on the first aircraft out.

The next day they sent eleven more C47's. There were supposed to be twelve, but one aborted. So eleven more came in and evacuated the remaining American's, four British and two Canadians. George had room on the last airplane to add eight Russians and a half a dozen Italians.

Sue: Where were you taken to?

Charles: Italy, back to allied control, they called it.

Sue: So you continued to stay there during the war then - until when?

Charles: No, we came out of Yugoslavia on August 10th, were debriefed and returned to our squadron for personnel processing. We were sent to Naples to get on the convoy to come home but the convoy was busy working the invasion in Southern France, so we had to wait around Naples for five or six days for the convoy to return, pick us up and bring us home.

Sue: And you did come home?

Charles: To the United States, yes.

Sue: And what was the first thing you did when you got here?

Charles: We docked on Staten Island, NYC, where I was born and raised. There was a pay telephone on the dock and I called an old neighbor and asked her to call my mother who was now in Washington and tell her I was back in the States. This call preceded the War Dept. notice to mom that I was alive and no longer classified as “missing – in – action”. The War Dept. had notified her periodically that I was M.I.A.

Sue: You had a broken leg at that point, yes?

Charles: Yes, they wanted to x-ray it in the hospital in Italy and I said absolutely not.

Sue: Why?

Charles: My pilot had set my leg and I didn't know how good it was set and I didn't want them to say at the hospital, “we will break it and reset it”. I said if they were going to do that, let's do it in the States, not here. I knew I would be coming home because if you are MIA for more than fifty days you couldn't fly in the theater anymore. But if it was less than fifty days you could stay in the theater and the reason for that is the first time you are in the enemy territory, that's involuntarily, the Geneva Convention covers you, but the second time you are behind the lines the Geneva Convention doesn't cover you, and you are considered a spy. So they wouldn't let us fly the theater anymore for fear we might get shot down again.

The Germans knew we were in Yugoslavia. We transmitted our name, rank and serial number in the clear on our radio so the German's more than likely intercepted our transmission and knew we were there, so if we came back again they caught us, we would be treated as spies. The men in the

OSS (Office of Strategic Services) had no protection, they were pure at risk. These men risked their lives to save others.

The “Halyard mission” OSS troops were in Serbia twice: first time from December 1943 until July 1944, second time from August 2, 1944 until December 26, 1944.

I admire these OSS personnel and always will. They were all over the world doing this. They lived behind the lines, they were spies.

Anyway, we got back to the states and then I was sent to Langley Field Virginia radar school. When a class graduated we replaced our instructors who had never been overseas. We all had a bunch of decorations (I had a Purple Heart, Air Medals, seven Battle Stars on the ETO Ribbon and also the Presidential Unit Citation). We all had a chest full of ribbons so they kept us as instructors and shipped our instructors (who had bought homes, had wives and children and were “homesteading”). Their chins were down to their waist when they got word that they were going to go to the Pacific on B52’s.

Sue: So when did you come back here then?

Charles: Well I stayed as an instructor, at Langley. I left active duty in November 1945 and returned to Washington. I stayed in the Air Corps Reserve, and participated in training and retired finally as a Lt. Colonel.

Charles: So, back to Jefferson we are only at the beginning on Jefferson of what you want.

Sue: Yes. Okay we can do this maybe another

Charles: Have we changed anything?

Linda: No it’s fine.

Sue: Okay let’s see what we can do in the next ten minutes.

Charles: Back to Jefferson, we finally got the hall built and oh yes we did take a loan out one time with Arlington Fairfax Savings and Loan. The loan was \$26,000 and that was the biggest loan they ever made to that date.

I was dealing with the president of Arlington Fairfax Savings and Loan and he was uncertain of what to do. And he Harry Davis, who was our contractor, came forward and said, "I'll cosign the note" and we got the money. But this was the biggest loan that Arlington Fairfax Savings and Loan had ever made. Because, the houses in Jefferson Village were selling for \$9,000 and the house I bought in North Woodley was \$14,500 and it had a big lot, and basement, and three bedrooms and the whole bit for about \$15,000. Do you know where Jefferson Village is? (Response, yes) well you go over there and buy one of those houses you're looking at \$300,000 I guess, or better.

Sue: At least.

Charles: Yes, and they previously sold for \$8,500 to \$9 thousand. So, that is how things have changed. So a \$26,000 loan was a lot of money in those days. Well we got it and got the Hall up. We continued as a completely volunteer fire company until I guess until around maybe 1959 or 1960.

Sue: In 1969 the station, volunteer station 18 Jefferson was turned over to Fairfax County.

Charles: In 1959?

Sue: In 1969, I am talking volunteer station. Ten years before that.

Charles: I am talking about 1959, we'll get to that later; I am talking that in 1959 or 1960 they provided one paid fireman and we made him the Engineer. The reason we did that, Charlie Jones was his name, and he had been a volunteer with us. He worked days and maintained all of the equipment.

You know a fire engine has a lot of machinery on it, it has a big pump, a huge big pump with water and it has all kinds of gauges and outlets. A fire

engine has probably six outlets. Some are 2 ½" outlets and some are less. There are also two booster hoses on top on reels with 1" lines. That way you can get water on a fire really quick, you just grab one and run like heck. But, when you hook up a hydrant to supply the other ones you've got a different situation. You have 50 foot lengths of hose and sometimes you have to drag 50 feet and sometimes 200 feet or 300 feet of hose into a fire and it takes considerable manpower to do that. The fireman running the pump must keep account of the number and lengths of lines in use, sometimes as many as four lines.

How much pressure do you put on the pump? You put pressure enough to feed the longest line, so the man that is running the pump, the driver of the truck is usually the Engineer. You have all these gauges to tell how much pressure is on each line and which ones are out because you have the valves open, they call them gates, and you have to know which is the longest one and you feed that one. You never want to have a fireman in a fire and not give him water. So if you feed the longest line, the others will get plenty of water. They may even have to cut back on the waterpower in the shorter lines a little so as to not to be overwhelmed. A lot of times you see two firemen holding a hose. The reason is one person can't hold it. There is a way that you can take a hose, curl it around itself, (make a circle) and sit on the curl. One person can then control a 2 ½ or 3 inch line by himself. That is just one of the procedures that we learned at fire school.

So we had got the first paid fireman and we continued as a volunteer Company. We had six crews that we created. We did that purposely because we had A, B, C, D, E and F crews. An officer was in charge of each of them. We had a Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, Fire Captain, Lieutenant, and Sergeant. On the rescue side we had a Rescue Captain, Lieutenant, and Sergeant. We also had a Fire Marshall and Assistant Fire Marshall and they were the Officers of the company.

Sue: Did you have a family, wife and children?

Charles: Oh yeah, a wife and two children.

Sue: Okay.

Charles: Every sixth night my crew and I slept at the firehouse. The reason we had six crews was so you wouldn't always catch Sunday night or Saturday. We would go over there as soon as we got home from work, had dinner and spent time a little time with the family. We would then go over and stay at the firehouse all night. That way somebody was on duty which was lucky.

One night we were asleep in the upstairs bunk room and heard a commotion downstairs. We had a lanyard on the doors and when you had a fire you just jerked that string and the door popped up and went wide open. This night we heard a lot of commotion, (we always left the person door open). We heard a lot of yelling and horn blowing. A man was down in the equipment room screaming his head off. Fireman Horace Pulley was on duty with me. We slept in our clothes, and had our boots and fire pants alongside the bed (we called it running gear). As you came out of your bed you slid into you pants and boots pulled up the suspenders and you were half dressed. Your coat and helmet were alongside the fire engine.

So Pulley and I jumped into our boots and pants and were downstairs in a flash. This man said his wife was delivering a baby on the front seat of the car on the ramp. I jerked the door open and told Pauli to get the kit. He went to the ambulance and got the first-aid kit and when I got out there, the baby was emerging. I put my hand up and held that baby back so it would not emerge until we were ready. Pulley arrived and we cut her under pants off and eased the baby out. The umbilical cord was around the baby's neck, which was not good, so I quickly put my fingers under it and pulled it off his throat so he wouldn't choke. We delivered a nice little boy. It was their sixth child and this fellow was trying to go all the way from Manassas to D.C. The birth was fast. The more births a woman has the faster they come.

Sue: So, some nights were pretty exciting there.

Charles: Yes, we delivered the baby and then cut the umbilical cord. The umbilical cord is like a piece of cable. We double clamped it with two

clamps on each side and cut it in between. You do this so if one clamp breaks loose you don't have a problem.

Sue: Is that the only baby you helped deliver?

Charles: Yes.

Sue: Oh! Okay, I call that pretty exciting though.

Charles: I think it was Pulley's second, I think he had delivered one before. Anyway we got the baby delivered and we went over to D.C., where the doctor was waiting. We weren't supposed to do that, but volunteers could do a lot of things that paid men can't do today.

Sue: Is that the same today?

Charles: No. Firemen are union now and have strict rules and rightly so. A man I worked with at the pentagon had a son who was born and with something wrong with his hips. They did surgery on him and had his hips and legs spread out with a device in between his knees to keep them apart. His name was Tom Schnurr. I worked with Tom at the Pentagon Air Force Headquarters and he lived in our community. I said, "Tom why don't we take the boy for a ride in the ambulance. He asked what I was talking about and I told him I would come over, get the boy, put him on a litter, so he can look out the window and we will take him for a ride around the community. So we did. We took the boy out and we rode around for about an hour, and then took him home.

Sue: How old was the boy?

Charles: Four or five, just a child. I was a designated driver.

At Christmas time, some other volunteers in North Woodley and I would take the engine, complete with a Santa clause, to our community children's Christmas party using out red lights and siren. Santa gave out candy. The children were in total awe. There was a Christmas tree planted in one of the circles decorated with Christmas lights.

My immediate neighbor Dick Carr, Gilbert Jones, and I would get the fire engine. Gilbert "Gillie" was the brother of Charlie Jones, our first paid fireman. Gillie was a big stout guy and made a very fine Santa Claus. We gave him a bag of lollipops and wrapped candy and we would go up on the hill and turn on all the lights, blow the siren and park the fire engine. We would have our running gear on (you don't usually have it on when you are driving but I would keep it on) and Santa Claus would get off the back of the engine and all of us would get out and all of these little children would go wild. We would spend about twenty-five minutes, or so giving out candy and the kids putting the hats on the youngsters and they would just went crazy. The whole community was up there.

Sue: Do you miss that?

Charles: Oh yes. You couldn't do that today; they would never let you take a piece out without a valid purpose.

We didn't only do that for our children in our community, we would do it for anybody who asked us. We did a lot of things they can't do today.

Back to the fire department - we got our first paid man and then gradually they would add another. From time to time, the County did issue a red identification metal plate to put above your license plate and they cost twenty-five dollars. I asked the county one time, why do we have to pay twenty-five dollars when we contribute so much to the county and if it wasn't for us, you would have no fire protection and it would cost you a

fortune to put in all paid firemen. The response was, oh we can't do that we need the money. We had created our own plates to identify ourselves (Charles pulled out a metal plate) as firemen. Finally the county produced the same plates as they did for the citizens, but firemen had red ones. We still had to pay \$25.00 a year. This was before windshield decals.

Sue: A metal plate you would put on your car to identify that you are a volunteer fireman.

Charles: Yes. But they chose this for us and they never even gave us a free plate. We all put in a lot of time and effort. I spent five nights a month at the fire station from 7:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. and that was 55 hours and I went over there other times when the fire siren blew as we always responded. Usually I drove the second piece because I was a driver and because where I lived I could get there pretty quick. So we went to fires and risked our lives and every other thing and the county wouldn't even give us the license plates for free, which I thought was pretty stingy; I still think so. About 40 volunteers each contributed one hundred hours a month or better. If they had to pay for that, they would have been in big financial trouble. This happened at eighteen Fairfax County Stations in Fairfax County.

Sue: Sue asked about taking a picture since she brought her digital camera.

Charles: The reason we were called Company 18 is that we were the 18th company created in Fairfax. And then the next one was 19 and so on. This one was in 1923 or 1924. (Note we are sitting in Supervisor Smyth's conference room which is part of a firehouse.)

In 1969 the County Fire and Rescue Service became all paid. This is what I want to say about the volunteer firemen of Fairfax:

The first Chief we had was Lew Nolan he was a paid fireman in D.C, and because he was a paid fireman and the most trained and we made him Chief. We followed him with Paul Pawley, I believe, and then Bill Szymak who lived in Broyhill Park. Both Paul and Bill insisted that we go to Maryland Fire School to get trained. They mandated that we get there as often as we could. So finally when the county went paid it was Clarence "Sonny" Flynn, Haywood Johnson and one other member who became Professional Firemen and rose to the rank of Battalion Chief.

There were six paid County Battalion Chiefs and three were from Jefferson. I'll give you this list. We also had Buddy Deverow who was a Captain and in charge of the entire rescue service in the County. Allen Pugh was a Lieutenant and later became a Captain and another Jeffersonian went to Loudon County and took over the whole fire department. He became chief

of the fire and rescue services in Loudon County and he was a product of Jefferson. Bob Morrell became a state fire instructor.

Sue: So many of the people with Jefferson also got involved with other areas?

Charles: They all went up the ladder. We had three out of the six Battalion Chief's from Jefferson. Some other men went paid and became Captains. (Captains are in charge of a station). Sometimes the Captains act as temporary Battalion Chiefs if the Battalion Chiefs are on vacation. They temporarily assume the title and duties of a Battalion Chief.

Sue: Is there something else, Linda that you would like to ask Mr. Davis?

Linda: I think if we could just borrow some of the materials that you brought in, to make copies that would be great.

Charles: We had a telephone call roster to keep in touch. This roster permitted us to notify everyone of necessary events.

Linda: We thank you very much for bringing all this information in.

Sue: Thank you.

[PART 2 - Charles remembered something for the record.]

Charles: Are you ready now?

Linda: Yes

Charles: The Jefferson trained people who aspired and assumed the following positions: The paid Battalion Chiefs were Clarence Flynn, Hayward Johnson and William Deveraux; paid Captains were Alan Pugh and Wayne Bennett; paid Lt. was William Franklin and paramedic technician was Alan Flynn, Clarence Flynn's son; Robert DuBois became Chief of Williamsburg Fire Department then he became Chief of Loudon County; the

volunteer Chief at Fairfax City was Charles Seay (that is Company 3 in Fairfax).

Virginia State Fire Instructors were Paul Poling, Clarence Flynn, Edward Johnson, William Slimak, William Deveraux, Allen Pugh, Robert DuBois and Robert Morell. A fellow by the name of Tommy Adams, who was a member of Jefferson, founded the Hillman Private Ambulance Service. He had three or four vehicles. The man we were always indebted to for the use of the CITGO Gas Station where we kept our equipment was Nolan Johnson. But I would like to have all those names included in your history because I think Jefferson spawned more paid professional firemen than any other company in Fairfax County.

Linda: Thank you.

Charles: When it came time to turn over the firehouse to the county, which seemed to be the proper thing to ultimately do. As I told you earlier I had Harry Davis build the buildings. The only contact between the two buildings was a strip of copper flashing across the roof connecting with the second building (fire hall). So theoretically the property could have been divided right down the middle. The volunteer fire people could have kept the fire hall and given the equipment room to the county and that's really all envisioned during construction. But I was no longer a part of the fire department. I knew this scheme and I thought everybody knew it, but apparently not because they deeded both buildings to the county. The county said, "Don't worry about it, we will let you keep the fire hall and you can use it however you choose." The members were believers and not experienced or skilled to deal with these sorts of people.

So what happened? Seven days after they got the hall the county was in there partitioning the hall and they put in a Chief's office in there and the Fire Marshall's office. They promised us the use of the hall as long as we existed and a week later they went and reconstructed the whole thing. Fairfax County stole our hall. It wasn't big enough that we gave them probably close to a million dollars worth of property, that wasn't good enough for them, so I don't think much of Fairfax County promises. That was a dirty thing to do. They said we will leave you the hall and if you want

to use it as a community center you can do it. We still had enough people in the volunteer group to do it, but the county lied to us.